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The Free Church System

Compared with the
German State Church.

—BY—

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CONTENTS.

Introductory	5
Preface	6
Introductory to the English Edition.....	8
I. Advantages of a Free Church.....	9
1. In a Free Church Theological Learning most Naturally Assumes its Proper Place as a Servitor of the Church.....	9
2. Only a Free Church is in Position to Order her Appointments for the Upbuilding of her Congregations with Exclusive Reference to her Distinctive Character as Revealed in her Confessions.....	16
3. In a Free Church the Pastor is Elected and Called by those who Actually Attend the Services of the Church; whereas in a State Church Votes are Cast and Elections frequently Decided by Per- sons who Never Enter the Church except upon Election Days.....	19
4. The Pastor of a Free Church is, both in his Preaching and in his Personal Relations with his Congregation, more a Man of the Peo- ple than the State Church Pastor.....	22
5. In a Free Church the Man Sustains the Office, while in a State Church the Office Sustains the Man.....	25
6. A Free Church Educates her Members in the Grace of Giving....	27
7. The Papers Published in a Free Church Enable the Laity to Un- derstand Pending Ecclesiastical Questions and to Participate Intel- ligently in the Deliberations of the Congregation and Synod.....	29
8. Under a Free Church System the Individual Members are Brought into Such Relations to One Another that the Deep-seated Longing for Christian Fellowship is Met in the Most Natural Way under the Sanction of the Church itself.....	30
Note of Information For American Readers.....	33
II.—Disadvantages of a Free Church.....	36
1. A Free Church is Liable to be Divided into Many Factions, which, Forming Independent Organizations, Struggle with One Another for the Control of Territory.....	36
2. In Free Church Countries there are always Many Congregations which, Fearing to Lose their Liberty, Refuse to Unite with any Synod, and, since the Laity are seldom Competent to Decide Doc- trinal Questions without the Guidance of the Clergy, the Greatest Damage is often Wrought.....	42
3. The Pastor's Sense of Dependence upon the Good-will of his Con- gregation often Weakens his Testimony for the Truth.....	47

4. Since in a Free Church the Congregation can Flourish only when the Pastor is Abundant in Labors, the Tendency is to Prefer Young Men, and thus Old and Experienced Pastors are Left without Work or Bread49
5. As the Pastor in a Free Church is Compelled to Devote so Much of his Energy to the Advancement of Financial Interests, there is Danger that the Spiritual Oversight of the Flock may be Neglected.53
- Concluding Remarks54



Introduction.

The pamphlet of Professor Neve appears at an opportune moment in view of the present situation of affairs in Germany. Within the past few months the conviction has been freely expressed in many circles, both clerical and lay, that the State Church is not in a position to lead back the alienated multitudes to Christian faith. This feeling has given rise to the most desperate propositions, as, for example, that the former pastor, Goehre, who has joined the ranks of the Social Democracy, should establish a Free Church. We cannot understand why there should be such hesitancy in adopting the most simple and direct method of meeting the difficulty. If the State Church is no longer able to carry forward the work inaugurated in the Reformation, it will have to be modified accordingly. Of this I am fully persuaded. We are not, indeed, to think of free churches like those of England and America, but of a Church of the People freed from the control of the State. Vinet, the great champion of ecclesiastical independency, demanded as the first essential a Free National Church. Such would be also my ideal. In Free Churches, particularly when small and weak, the Dollar often plays the role of the archiepiscopate and exerts an influence which is frequently more disastrous in its effects than the power of the civil government. But a free, popular Church of the Reformation would, I venture to hope, be able to win back the confidence and affection of our people. There prevails among them a sincere desire for Christian life and ecclesiastical supervision. If their real advancement were guaranteed in the establishment of a free popular Church of the Reformation based upon the Scriptures and the Confession, the progress of believing Protestantism would, I firmly believe, be more secure, more joyous and more triumphant. May this contribution from beyond the sea throw light upon the important problem of ecclesiastical liberty and aid in dispelling prejudices, shattering restrictive traditions and preparing the way for better days to come.

ADOLPH STOECKER.

Preface.

It is a part of my duty as professor in the Theological Seminary at this place to give to our German students, who for the most part come to us after the completion of their theological studies in Germany as full-fledged candidates for the ministry, suitable instruction upon the practical questions which they will be compelled to face as pastors in the Free Lutheran Church of America, such as, e. g., "Church Polity in German and English Churches," "the Language Question," "Characteristic Differences between Lutherans and Reformed," "How to Deal with Congregations a Portion of whose Membership was Originally Reformed," "the So-called Galesburg Rule," or the question of "Pulpit and Altar Fellowship," "Church Discipline," "Secret Societies," "Attitude of the Pastor Toward Church Fairs, Bazaars, etc.," "Revivals," "Young People's Societies," the "Temperance Movement," "Woman Suffrage," the "Puritan Sunday," etc. In order to make the discussion of these questions, pertaining as they do chiefly to the sphere of pastoral theology, profitable, it seemed to me to be necessary to first give the young men so recently arrived in America some acquaintance with the nature of the Free Church as distinguished from the State Church to which they had been accustomed, since with a proper conception of the peculiar position of our American Free Church very many of the problems which must confront the German Lutheran pastor in this land during the first year of his ministry find easy solution. It is to the attempt to prepare a lecture upon the subject, introductory to such a course of preparatory studies as above indicated, that the present little work owes its origin. It is published in response to many urgent requests, and is printed in Germany in the hope that it may be read in those circles in the Fatherland in which the question of Free vs. State Church is being seriously agitated. I am well aware that the views expressed in Part I. Thesis 1 will not meet with general approval in Germany; nor do I claim infallibility when I assert my belief that the positions there assumed must of

necessity be maintained by everyone who is a member of the Free Church from inner conviction.

I speak confessedly in the interest of the Free Church; but it will be evident from the perusal of Part II. that I am not blind to the very serious disadvantages attaching to such a system.

It is not the object of this little pamphlet to treat exhaustively the question of a Free Church as compared with a State Church. I have here merely put upon record that which has fallen directly under my personal observation during an experience of about twelve years in the Free Lutheran Church of America. These purely practical reflections, presented in the form of disconnected theses, may perhaps furnish material to be used by some other hand in a thorough and philosophical treatment of the subject.

In comparing the Free Church with the State Church it is not necessary for us to decide which of the two forms of ecclesiastical organization is the only proper one. Even though in separate theses the advantages of the one form and the disadvantages of the other are set forth, yet the broad general question is here scarcely touched upon, as to which of the two forms is even relatively the better. We leave this as an open question, and freely acknowledge that whatever has become a historical reality has a certain right to existence. It will simply be our task to portray the working of the Free Church principle as contrasted with that of the State Church. Hence it will be unnecessary to review the historical development of the two systems. We recognize both as actually existing, and merely seek to trace their characteristic features, particularly those of the latter. We shall therefore throughout the entire discussion have occasion to speak of the State Church only in so far as it may be necessary in order to set forth distinctly the brighter and darker features of the Free Church. This object will be attained if we carefully consider (1), The Advantages and (2), The Disadvantages, of a Free Church.

J. L. N.

INTRODUCTORY TO THE ENGLISH EDITION.

When the Manager of the German Literary Board informed me that he had arranged for the printing of this pamphlet in an English translation, my first thought was: But the discussion of the subject has been too largely regulated with reference to German readers upon both sides of the ocean; and, further, in depicting the features of the Free Church in America, it is the German rather than the English congregations which have been kept in view. I finally, however, became reconciled to the idea of the publication in English dress, provided a few paragraphs might be inserted here and there, if only in the form of foot-notes, supplementary or explanatory for English readers. This I have attempted to do, although only where it has seemed to me to be imperatively necessary.

J. L. N.

I. Advantages of a Free Church.

We find a convenient starting-point in the question which not infrequently becomes a burning one in positive circles in the State Church of Germany, i. e., Whether theological science should be free, or should stand in such a relation of subordination to the Church, that the professors of theology should be limited in the scope of their teaching by the practical interests of the Church. When we come to the discussion of this problem, we at once discover a decided advantage in the position of the Free Church.

1.—IN A FREE CHURCH, THEOLOGICAL LEARNING MOST NATURALLY ASSUMES ITS PROPER PLACE AS A SERVITOR OF THE CHURCH.

In a State Church scientific investigation is free, not only in the sphere of philosophy but in that of theology as well. The theological professors in a university are not responsible to any ecclesiastical authority. The State alone appoints them and they are under the supervision of the Ministry of Public Worship and Education; the influence of the Church is, from a legal point of view, practically nothing. In the State Church, all ecclesiastical bodies and confessional tendencies have equal rights under one jurisdiction—even such tendencies as deliberately aim at the utter overthrow of the Christian faith as expressed in the Confessions. Every theological professor is at liberty to present to his classes or to the Church at large the results of his personal investigations, whether these be in harmony with the faith of the Church, or in direct opposition to it. The Church is compelled to subject her prospective pastors to the influence of such a promiscuous assemblage of instructors, since only those who have completed the course of study prescribed at the university are, according to the regulations of the State Church, eligible to the gospel ministry. As a result, the pulpits of the Lutheran Church are frequently filled by men who have lost their faith in revelation, in miracles, in vicarious atonement by the death of

Christ—in short, in all the positive and distinct doctrines of the Church's confession. That the ministrations of such pastors can have only disastrous results for the congregations under their charge is self-evident, and many men of wide repute and influence have demanded that theological professors shall be appointed, or at least nominated, by the Church—that the Church shall have the right to scrutinize and regulate the teaching of the men who are called to train her future ministers.

But this demand finds at once serious obstacles in its path. It is said in reply, that we dare not force any definite system of theology upon the theological student, as would be attempted in any institution under the direct supervision of the Church. He must be allowed, under the influence of the various theological tendencies, to press on to independent personal convictions. Only such theological views as have withstood the crucial test of critical assaults have real value. We cannot deny that there is to us something very attractive in this argument for a free theological science. Yet while according the fullest recognition and honor to the theologian who, surrounded by an atmosphere of negation, presses forward to positive Evangelical convictions, we cannot be unmindful of the multitudes of students who have fallen victims to the negative theology—who, carried away by the influence of talented champions of unbelief, never find their way back to positive faith. It is not alone the *arguments* of a negative professor which the student must overcome; it is the influence of his entire personality, which, if he be a man of magnetic force, bears his logic on to easy victory. The maturity of the student is indeed attested in his graduation from the gymnasium; but intellectual maturity is not of itself sufficient to insure against the insinuations of scepticism. Religious convictions are always much less a matter of the head than of the heart—less a product of the intellect than of the will. As Godet says, in the introduction to his Commentary on the Gospel of John: "The will is the real arbiter. Science gathers the materials and lays them in one or the other scale; but then comes always the will of the critic and determines their weight." The same truth is expressed by Paschal: "The heart has its proofs, of which the reason knows nothing." Since now the young men attending a university have only in rare instances

any deeply-rooted convictions and cannot therefore be generally regarded as spiritually mature, it is perfectly natural that their theological tendencies should reflect the character, whether positively Christian or sceptical, of the faculties under whose influence their studies have been prosecuted.

Another obstacle in the way of the proposed reform is found in the fact that the theological professors themselves unanimously and most positively decline to subject themselves to the authority of the Church. They maintain that science must be free. If under the protection of this liberty, untenable positions are sometimes advocated, a corrective is soon found in the free criticism which is sure to be provoked. Truth will always be victorious in the end. That this is true is indeed abundantly attested by the past history of the Church. But it still remains a very serious question whether it is necessary or proper, in view of the value of a single human soul, that so many congregations with their individual members should be led astray under the ministrations of rationalistic pastors before these rationalizing views have been refuted upon the field of theological investigation. This, it appears to us, is the decisive point in the problem before us.

We maintain that, however much may be said in favor of a "free science" from the view-point of the learning which "finds in itself its goal," from the point of view of the Church, which is concerned for the welfare of the congregations under its care and for the salvation of human souls, no other conclusion can be reached than that institutions for the training of pastors should, with particular reference to the personnel of their faculties, stand under the supervision and control of the Church. We in America cannot entertain the thought of any other arrangement. Were we compelled to draw our pastors from an institution whose faculty was half composed of followers of Wellhausen and Ritschl, we would very speedily realize the disastrous consequences in our synods, conferences and even in our congregations.

But where Church and State are united, insurmountable difficulties will always be found to lie in the way of the regulation of theological faculties by the Church. The National Church is itself as a body by no means conspicuous for even a

moderate degree of internal harmony in principles or aim. Modern theology has already allured into its ranks and inoculated with its ideas many pastors and countless ecclesiastical officials; and even the portions of the Church which oppose these rationalistic tendencies do not maintain harmony among themselves. The Lutherans desire faculties whose teachings shall be positive, in the sense of the Lutheran confessions. That there is justice in this demand must be candidly acknowledged. Here in America at least, a Lutheran Synod which should be compelled to look for its pastors to a seminary whose faculty was partly Lutheran and partly Reformed, could not continue to live, or, if living, could certainly not develop along the line of its peculiar individuality.

In a Free Church, on the contrary, these problems whose satisfactory solution appears to be impossible in the State Church of Germany, disappear entirely. Here in America the Lutherans have from the beginning organized themselves in independent Synods; even every shade of Lutheranism has formed its own organization.* The Reformed Church has pursued the same course, as well as the various denominations related to it in doctrine and practice. Those who are indifferent in regard to the doctrines which separate the two great branches of the Protestant Church have combined their forces in a united body.** Here we find also independent organizations of ration-

*That I have not overlooked the disadvantages resulting from this, will be evident to the reader from the discussion found under Part II. Thesis 1.

**It is known as the "Evangelical Synod of North America." The idea which led to the forming of this organization was that of an actual union in fundamental principles, whereas the Union in Prussia has rather the character of a merely external combination for practical purposes. The latter imposes upon Lutherans and Reformed alike a form of Church government, but in such a way that each branch of the United Church retains its own peculiarities, as is evident from the liturgy now in use, which contains distinct formulas for the administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper to Lutherans and to Reformed. But the "Evangelical Synod of North America" has carried out the idea of union to a much greater extent. Its official Irion Catechism is an actual amalgamation of the Lutheran and Reformed catechisms. Although newly-admitted Lutheran congregations are permitted to retain the Lutheran catechism provisionally, their

alistic character, such as the Protestant Union and the Unitarian Church.

Each one of these churches has its own theological seminary, provided of course it has sufficient vitality to establish and sustain such an institution. (The German Evangelical Protestant Church, a rationalistic body with headquarters at Cincinnati, Ohio, although it has existed for many years, has never been able to provide an institution for the training of its own ministers). The various Lutheran, Reformed, and United Synods have imposing theological establishments, many of which are most complete in their equipment, sustained by large endowments and served by able corps of instructors. We may mention, for example, Gettysburg and Springfield, the principal seminaries of the Lutheran General Synod; the Philadelphia seminary of the General Council; the Corcordia seminary of the Missouri Synod at St. Louis; the Chicago Seminary under the oversight of Dr. Weidner; Capital University, Columbus, Ohio; Dubuque, Iowa, (Iowa Synod); Eden College, the theological Seminary of the United Church, at St. Louis, Mo.; Union Seminary, New York.

The professors in these theological schools, with the exception of Union Seminary (which in consequence has become

pastors are instructed to labor to secure its disuse and the introduction of the Synod's catechism. Every Lutheran congregation joining the "Evangelical Synod" is further, if possible, induced to erase the name "Lutheran" from its constitution and adopt the title, "Evangelical." Hence the United Church of America is totally different from the United Church of Prussia. The union effected in the "Evangelical Synod of North America" may be called a chemical, while that in Prussia is but a mechanical union. The "United" of America are to some extent identical with the so-called "Positive Union"—a party within the United National Church of Prussia. They are entirely different from the organized body of Lutherans within the United Prussian Church, which is represented by such men as Zoeckler, Cremer, Nathusius, Holtzheuer, Koelling, etc., and whose organ is the "Evangelische Kirchenzeitung" founded by Hengstenberg. A more thorough discussion of the relation of the German "United Church" of America to the National Church of Prussia may be seen in a recent publication of the author, also soon to appear in English, entitled: "Is there Really No Difference between the United Church of America and the National Church of Prussia?" (German Literary Board, Burlington, Iowa).

an advocate of modern theology) are appointed by the respective synods. They are elected by a Board of Directors selected with great care by the synods in their annual conventions. In assuming office, they are pledged by solemn oath to teach only in harmony with the confessions acknowledged by the synod or synods controlling the institution to which they are called.

The theological professors of Germany, indeed, who are by adequately-informed scholars of all lands recognized as the most able in the world, would regard such an arrangement as a restriction placed upon the freedom of research, and hence a death-blow to all true scientific study. But is not this an extreme view? Let us consider the situation more carefully. Under the American ecclesiastical polity, the separate theological schools stand out in prominence as representatives of the various synods. The theological views advocated by one synod are most carefully scrutinized and tested by the scholars of the other synods. He who is really familiar with the literature of the Lutheran Church in America, who has actually read the publications connected with the establishment, equipment and defence of the various synods, can view only with amazement the wealth of theological learning and the acuteness displayed in the discussions upon election, and upon the so-called "open questions" concerning the Church, the pastoral office, the Lutheran confessions, etc. Only those who are unacquainted with the history of the Lutheran Church in America can assert that theological science must languish in a Free Church. What an amount of earnest theological investigation is represented by the names: Krauth, Mann, Schmucker, Sprecher, Walther, Stelhorn, Loy, Schodde, Fritschel, Graebner, Pieper, Jacobs, Weidner, Spaeth, Valentine, Wolf, Richard, and in such periodicals as Brobst's "Monatshefte," "Lehre und Wehre," "Altes und Neues," "Lutheran Quarterly," "The Lutheran Church Review," "Homiletic Review," "The Independent!"

Such theological institutions as those of the Lutheran Church in America, although in comparison with the universities of Germany they are rather to be considered as "schools," are not necessarily nor in all respects merely agencies for the propagation of certain peculiar forms of doctrine. Views divergent from the teachings of the Church are fairly presented,

and the student is thus led to form his own opinions. It is true, indeed, that as the instructors fervently advocate their own views, it is to be expected that their pupils will be strongly influenced in the same direction. But, as already suggested, there is no such thing as entirely unbiased investigation—the heart, the inclinations, the will, must always determine the conclusion. And even though the much-lauded independent science were more than an empty dream, yet the student, whatever his intellectual attainments, is not commonly so mature spiritually that he may be trusted to enter the labyrinth of theological opinions without a guide.

Nor is it true that in a Free Church theological learning is muzzled, so that the investigator is not at liberty to express the results of his scientific investigations. If his studies lead him to entertain views out of harmony with those held in the synod with which he is connected, he is free to withdraw from the latter and devote his energies to the service of the synodical body with which he may find himself in accord. Thus the Church and, what is still more important, her individual congregations, are guarded against doctrinal aberrations.

Finally, in a country in which the Church is free, in which those of similar convictions naturally combine their forces in distinct and independent organizations, every separate theological tendency is compelled to give evidence of its practical utility in the development of the Church. It will very soon become manifest whether it possesses sufficient energy to attain actual results in the upbuilding of congregations. In the State Church of Germany, the adherents of liberalism and the rationalizing theologians take the lead. It is easy for them to talk, since they repose in the lap of the State Church, by whose legal enactments congregations are constructed, consisting of so and so many members, with definitely fixed incomes which must under all circumstances be paid by the executors. In America it is an open question whether the preaching of rationalistic pastors will satisfy the requirements of believing souls truly longing for spiritual nourishment. If not, the latter will not unite under such leadership; and if a congregation be already formed, it will not grow, but will retrograde in membership and finally be compelled to disband.

This being the case, it is extremely interesting and instructive to observe that the "German Evangelical Protestant Church in America," which occupies the position of the Protestant Union in Germany, the Reformers in Switzerland and the Moderns in Holland, has to-day only about forty ministers and but fifty-two congregations, although it has labored in this field for at least a half century. In Germany the preachers of the liberalistic type are constantly assuring us that the preaching of the Gospel in accordance with the "ancient faith" is responsible for the empty churches; but it is our experience in America, that a communion standing so decidedly as does the Lutheran Church upon the ancient faith, numbers to-day 7,155 pastors, 11,976 congregations and 1,790, 489 communicants! And all the denominations which have grown great and powerful in this country have become so by virtue of the positive stand which they have taken upon the fundamental truths of Christianity. As further evidence that negative theology possesses no constructive power in a Free Church, we may point to the Unitarian Church, which, although so long in existence and with the largest opportunities of advancement, has but the most meagre results to show for its toil. The truth is, that rationalistic theology has nothing to offer for the heart, and can hence achieve no visible results. But this truth is made manifest in the most convincing way in a Free Church.

We now proceed a step farther, in order to bring to light another advantage of a Free Church. There are some aspects of the matter, in view of which even the most thoroughgoing champion of a civil establishment must acknowledge that a Free Church is in a better position to perform the task assigned to the Church of Christ. One such aspect may be presented as follows:—

2.—ONLY A FREE CHURCH IS IN POSITION TO ORDER HER APPOINTMENTS FOR THE UPBUILDING OF HER CONGREGATIONS WITH EXCLUSIVE REFERENCE TO HER DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER AS REVEALED IN HER CONFESSIONS.

The proper conception of the Church is a subject of very frequent discussion in our day. This is one of the questions which the Church herself has not yet fully exhausted and which

still await complete symbolic determination. Without entering into a consideration of the difficulties of the problem, or attempting to reconcile the two extreme views advocated, viz., that of English Independency championed in Germany by Diedrich and Th. Harms and in America by Walther, and the more hierarchical conception defended by Vilmar in Germany and with especial vigor by Grabau, as the founder of the Buffalo Synod, we can certainly all agree in the assertion that, for effectual work in the upbuilding of the Kingdom of God on earth, there is need of a combination of local congregations into ecclesiastical bodies, so that the separate congregations may be guided by the agencies put into operation by the general body. A congregation requires various helps for the prosecution of its work, such as catechisms, hymn-books, liturgies, etc. The separate congregation is not in a position to provide these things for itself; but their preparation must be committed to a selected board, which may profit from the past history of the Church. In every congregation there will sooner or later arise difficulties, questions of doctrine or practice, which can be properly answered only by men of thorough theological training. The congregation is lost, which is so blind as to imagine that it stands in no need of synodical counsel, but can determine all questions for itself. This is the error into which many a congregation falls in a land where all church life is free, as will be more fully pointed out in Part II. Thesis 2.

A State Church avoids the danger, that the local congregation may undertake to determine questions which can be properly settled only by the Church at large through her experienced leaders. But the point of peril here lies in the composition of the ecclesiastical board. The head of the Church in Prussia is the King, as the *summus episcopus*—although only in a part of the present territory of Prussia, since the annexed provinces were permitted to retain as far as possible their original church organizations; and other princes of Germany stand in a similar relation to the Church within their domains. Now in whatever way this supervision of the Church by the civil authorities is exercised in the various parts of Germany and in the provinces of Prussia—whether through a superior church council or through consistories, the Church must in any case be content

that the decision of matters of grave importance shall be influenced, and even in many instances determined, by the participation of men who do not stand upon the basis of her confessions—who either actually adhere to other confessions, as in Bavaria, or who are entirely indifferent to the great problems and the welfare of Christianity. This is inevitable under the circumstances. The General Superintendent, for example, upon whose theological tendency so much depends for the subjects of the province, is not elected by the Church, but appointed by the Prince or his executive officers. The Prince has also the decisive influence in the construction of the consistory and of similar bodies. It is true, that he naturally endeavors to make the best selection in his power; he even carefully gauges the prevailing sentiment in the Church before making any important appointment. But in the Church itself opposing tendencies may be struggling for the mastery. Besides the positive Lutherans, Reformed, and United, the rationalistic element within the Church is also a force with which the politics of the State Church must reckon. In order to maintain the good-will of both parties, the board is often compelled to make a selection which aims at satisfying both, but commonly without success. It is thus seen that the State has the finally decisive word in questions in which the Church herself should be permitted to speak with careful regard for her distinctive character as revealed in her confession.

There are in Germany, indeed, also here and there provincial synods, assemblages composed of clerical delegates, in which the latter have the power to determine questions relating to the welfare of the churches which they represent. But in these bodies both the confessional and the negative tendencies are represented. If the latter are in any case numerous, the wording of many an important resolution designed to promote the interests of the Church must be modified, and many a resolution adopted bears upon its face the marks of compromise. How momentous in results for a congregation and for an entire province for many years to come is the adoption of a hymn-book or a liturgy! Yet in such important matters, which affect so deeply the eternal welfare of multitudes, in a State Church believers and unbelievers must be associated. That under such circumstances so ex-

cellent a work as the Prussian liturgy published a few years ago, and so splendid a hymn-book as, for example, that published about fifteen years ago in Schleswig-Holstein could be produced, is a source of genuine wonder; and such an outcome must have brought great encouragement to the men of positive faith in those lands who have so much cause to groan under the conflict with rationalism in the Church itself, to which they are condemned by the conditions existent in the State Church.

Whatever may be the weaknesses of the Free Church in America, its synods can at least, unhindered by any instructions or limitations from without, adopt and carry out resolutions for the advancement of the congregations committed to their care. A Lutheran synod in a Free Church can publish catechisms, hymn-books, liturgies and the like, without being influenced in the least by any rationalistic tendencies; for men of such tendencies are outside of the Lutheran Church, united in organizations of their own.

In the Theses to follow, we desire to call attention to a number of points, which relate indeed only to certain separate features of church-life, but which nevertheless serve to illustrate the characteristic differences between a State Church and a Free Church.

3.—IN A FREE CHURCH THE PASTOR IS ELECTED AND CALLED BY THOSE WHO ACTUALLY ATTEND THE SERVICES OF THE CHURCH: WHEREAS IN A STATE CHURCH VOTES ARE CAST AND ELECTIONS FREQUENTLY DECIDED BY PERSONS WHO NEVER ENTER THE CHURCH EXCEPT UPON ELECTION DAYS.

When in my native home, Schleswig-Holstein, a vacant pastorate is to be filled, three candidates are usually proposed (praesentiert), by the Board of the State Church, and these upon an appointed day all preach in turn from the same text—which has been assigned in advance.* The election by the congregation follows immediately. The members of a Lutheran congre-

*In other places in Germany the candidates preach upon consecutive Sundays. The reader will bear in mind that the following description is colored by the traditional customs in Schleswig-Holstein.

gation entitled to vote are all men above twenty-five years of age who have lived within the congregation for at least two years and have given no public offense by dishonorable conduct, no question whatever being raised as to their adherence to the confessional basis of their Church. The Board is often greatly exercised to meet the approval of all parties in the congregation—both the orthodox and the rationalistic elements. With this in view the three candidates are selected and nominated. Where the congregation is composed of the elements above referred to, one of the candidates proposed is generally a man of orthodox views, the second a rationalist, and the third probably occupies a medium position between the two extremes. If now the people who never in any case enter the Church during the year would kindly remain at home on the election-day, all would be well enough; for in that case the people who expect to attend church might elect the man whom they regarded as best able to preach to their spiritual edification. But it never occurs to the confessed rationalist to be absent on the day of so important an election. Although he enters the Church very seldom, if at all, upon other occasions, he has yet an interest in seeing to it that the coming pastor, who will be a man of some influence in the community and be counted among the leaders in its social life, shall not be altogether "benighted." They want to have a man who is genuinely progressive, who preaches no longer the "ancient," but the "modern" doctrines; who does not annoy his members with efforts for their conversion; who is so tolerant towards those who do not go to church that he will not scorn to take an occasional glass with them. Very frequently—though of course not always—the time preceding the day of the election is devoted to a diligent canvass on the part of these rationalistic and worldly-minded members. In the places of public amusement and dissipation the chief subject of conversation is the approaching choice of a pastor. Which of the candidates shall we elect? Which of them is liberal enough to be entitled to our votes? In the large cities, where the public press is a recognized force, the Reformed-Jewish paper aids in winning public favor for the candidate whom the rationalistic party has decided to support. I once witnessed such an election. The sermons were delivered and the candidates withdrew, when the election was

held by ballot in the church. The names upon the ballots were read in a loud voice and many with pencils in their hands eagerly kept the tally. I can still vividly recall the satisfied bearing of the bailiff and the warden (the social leaders in the village) as the name of their candidate was read again and again; for they had been working day and night for the past week to protect their town from the threatened infection of an orthodox pastor upon it. They walked up and down in the chancel of the church looking at the paintings as they would have gazed upon interesting objects in a cathedral in some distant land. It could be easily seen that they did not often allow themselves the pleasure of spending any of their valuable time within the walls of the church. Upon the gallery at the side of the church sat a shoemaker, who might be seen at the same spot every Sunday. His countenance became more grave at every mark upon his tally-list. I approached him with the question: "What will be the result?" "Ah," replied he, "those who never go to church are electing the pastor for us who would so much like to attend." It is true, indeed, that elections are not always conducted in this way. In rural districts the abuses are probably less marked. But that the scene above described is often duplicated in small, medium-sized and larger towns, I know by personal observation; and I know also of talented preachers who rank as genuine pulpit orators, who were repeatedly defeated at elections because it was reported in advance that they were decidedly orthodox.

The entire organization of a Free Church excludes the possibility of such procedures. The unchurchly and rationalistic, at least if their views are openly acknowledged, are not to be found among the membership of a Lutheran congregation. When the necessity arises for the election of a pastor, the congregation makes application through its officers to the president of the synod to which it belongs. If he in response to the expressed desire of the congregation suggests the names of several candidates, there will be found among these not one, at least so far as the knowledge of the presiding officer of the synod extends, who does not stand unequivocally upon the confessional basis of the synod and hence also of the congregation. If trial sermons are arranged for, they are held, not by all the candidates on one day, but at the regular services upon successive Sundays.

But many congregations, feeling that there is in such a system of candidating something beneath the proper dignity of the ministerial office—as someone has drastically said, that the hearing of trial-sermons seemed to him like stroking fattened oxen in a butcher's stall, recognizing also the fact that a trial-sermon is at any rate not a fair specimen of the average of a man's preaching, as one naturally puts on his best coat when he goes visiting, request the president of the Synod to recommend a man, whom they then, relying upon his recommendation, proceed to elect, or for whom at least an election is held before the presentation of any other candidate. We hear occasionally, it is true, of Lutheran congregations which advertise the vacancy of their pulpits in the secular papers and postpone the election until a whole array of preachers has passed in review before them. These congregations, however, which are often most neatly hoodwinked by men of no real character and whose only equipment is a glib tongue, are not found in connection with any synodical body. In drawing a parallel between the State Church and the Free Church in the matter of pastoral elections, we have had in mind on the latter side only such congregations as belong to some recognized Lutheran Synod.

From the election we pass naturally to a consideration of the character of the pastor himself, which we shall find to be greatly influenced by his position as the minister of a Free or of a State Church. This brings to view some very serious disadvantages of the Free Church system, which will be treated at length in Theses 3 and 4 of Part II. But there are two aspects of the subject in which the Free Church appears to decided advantage, and to these attention is called in the two following theses:

4.—THE PASTOR OF A FREE CHURCH IS, BOTH IN HIS PREACHING AND IN HIS PERSONAL RELATIONS WITH HIS CONGREGATION, MORE A MAN OF THE PEOPLE THAN THE STATE CHURCH PASTOR.

This is an inevitable consequence of the conditions under which a Free Church exists. The congregations, including only such as have a real interest in the welfare of the church, are small in comparison with those of Germany, which embrace all

the inhabitants of a given district. There are in America independent congregations numbering not more than twenty-five families. Forty families constitute a fair-sized congregation, while one embracing eighty or a hundred families is considered large. The pastor of so small a flock is brought frequently into contact with each of his members in the course of the year and is able to make several pastoral visits annually upon each family of his charge. He meets his members, many of whom are bound together by ties of natural relationship, at family gatherings, and has opportunities of conversing with them before and after divine services, in the organizations of the church, at congregational meetings, etc. How great a contrast to this is commonly seen in the State Churches of Germany! In many cities, thousands of families belong to one congregation. The busy pastor is glad if he is able to discharge the most pressing duties of his office, i. e., the conducting of public services, the instruction of catechumens, the keeping of the official records, the administration of baptism, solemnizing of marriages, and burial of the dead. He is called upon to baptize many a child whose family name he has never before heard. He buries many a member whose very name was unknown to him. The occasional pastoral visits which he is able to make are limited to the few families with whom he has happened to become somewhat intimately acquainted.

In a Free Church, on the contrary, the pastor has not only better opportunity of cultivating the acquaintance of his members, but he is compelled to live among them, sharing their joys and sorrows and not overlooking the least nor the poorest; for he must be constantly upon his guard lest any member of his flock lose interest, stray away and join some other fold. He is compelled by the circumstances under which his ministry is prosecuted to do everything in his power to maintain relations of sincerest mutual confidence between the members of his congregation and himself. In a State Church, a true pastor will indeed earnestly covet the personal good-will of his parishioners; but this is not necessary to the preservation of the congregation intact. It is almost impossible to compel him to relinquish a pastorate to which he has once been appointed. With the

fixing and payment of his salary the congregation has nothing directly to do. (*)

I am, indeed, well aware, that just at this point we encounter one of the disadvantages of the Free Church plan, of which I shall not fail to speak at the proper time; yet it is a fact that this relationship of the pastor to everyone of his members keeps him in constant sympathy with his people. He learns to know his congregation—their temptations and their sins. His frequent intercourse with them suggests the points at which pastoral ministrations may be effective, and furnishes material for sermonizing. He is preserved from the peril of losing himself in abstract, unpractical discourses, and his sermons have a direct reference to the actual condition of his congregation. This realism is a peculiarity of the American pulpit. The pastor here speaks much more in the language of the people, and his hearers therefore understand him. There are, it is true, some very highly gifted pastors in Germany who display admirable skill in adapting their preaching to the plane of thought of the common people; but the sermons heard from German pulpits are usually so abstract that they lie beyond the horizon of the common man. That man of the people, Stoecker, is surely a competent witness upon this point, and he has recently, in an article in the "Kirchenzeitung," lamented that the Protestant preaching of Germany lacks in popular character, and hence fails to move effectually the feelings of the common people." Whether this is to be attributed partly to the nature of the humanistic culture received at the German schools, we will not attempt to decide; but it is at least in greater measure traceable to the position of the pastor over his flock instead of among them as is the case in a Free Church.

*In Germany at present the salary of a pastor is increased every five years, without regard to the measure of success attending his labors. Hence it frequently occurs that the more marked the falling off in church attendance and the more the church suffers in its real interests, the more liberal becomes the financial support of the pastor. Under such circumstances he of course loses the external stimulus to labor. Where the pastor is, as he should be, a faithful servant of the Lord, the arrangement is an excellent one. He is able, without any thought of his daily bread, to preach the truth boldly as his conscience may dictate. (See Part II. Thesis 3).

Intimately connected with the above are some further considerations which may be combined under the proposition:—

5.—IN A FREE CHURCH THE MAN SUSTAINS THE OFFICE, WHILE IN A STATE CHURCH THE OFFICE SUSTAINS THE MAN.

Such a statement can of course be only relatively true. In a State Church, the office will not under *all* circumstances sustain the man. If a pastor by gross offences proves himself unworthy of the office, he will be ejected from it in either case. The proposition holds good only as applied to the general character of the men bearing the pastoral office. That very much more is to be required of a pastor than that he refrain from flagrant sins, is plainly indicated by St. Paul in the pastoral epistles, e. g., I. Tim., iii., 1-7. The demands here made have regard to the personal character of the bishop, his marriage, his domestic life, the training of his children, his daily conduct, even his temperament. Now it is to be said that in a State Church, where the pastor is thrown into much less frequent contact with his people and in which he is but little dependent upon the opinion of the people to whom he ministers, a man of many personal failings may be able to retain his position much longer than in a Free Church. In the latter, the daily life of the pastor is so fully open to the scrutiny of everyone that a man whose faults are very manifest can seldom long sustain himself. This assertion appears to be in conflict with the acknowledged fact, that not infrequently pastors who could no longer obtain employment in the Church in Germany have secured positions in America; but the contradiction is only apparent. The ineligibility of many men for the pastoral office in Germany has often been based, not upon any offence against morality, but merely upon the transgression of some regulation, which the State Church finds it necessary to enforce under the circumstances, but the violation of which does not in the least reflect upon the character of the man nor upon his fitness for the work of the Gospel ministry. In regard to cases in which men who have in Germany really proved themselves unworthy have secured charges in America, it is to be borne in mind that many things occurred in earlier days which could not be repeated to-day within the bounds of any regular, honorable synod. All our synods, with

the exception of a few which are not recognized by the Church at large, refuse to consider any application unless accompanied by all proper evidences of worthy character and a clean record. And if we follow the course of the men of really defective character who have become pastors in America, it will be found, as already stated, that they have nowhere been able to sustain themselves. They have indeed been elected by congregations, but soon detected and dismissed, and the poor unfortunates have generally been found with staff in hand.

Not only in regard to substantial worth, but in the line of practical capacity as well, the Free Church makes greater demands upon its pastors than is commonly done in a State Church. The free congregation, finding itself surrounded by many rival congregations, with the possibility of losing or winning members every week, must struggle for its existence. All the forces of the congregation must be enlisted, and the pastor must have the talent to organize these forces in societies, committees, etc., and to map out programmes for them and carry out the plans adopted. This again demands much ability to deal with men and win them to the support of chosen measures. A large degree of this practical capacity is an indispensable requirement in the pastor of a Free Church. Upon his personal fitness as a leader depends the growth and prosperity of the congregation. This explains the fact, that many a pastor from Germany, well equipped in theological learning, coming into the Free American Church, has accomplished but little here, and has been mortified to see men of much inferior culture preferred by the congregations.*

A Free Church possesses another manifest advantage in the opportunities which it affords for developing the activities of the

*Pastor Wm. Berkemeyer, the founder and for many years the superintendent of the Lutheran Emigrant House in New York, once said to me: "I have seen many pastors from Germany pass through our House to assume charge of Lutheran congregations in this country, but I have always observed that those who had been for more than ten years in the pastoral office abroad accomplished practically nothing here." This is very easy to account for—these men were not trained by their ministerial labors in the State Church in practical ability and adaptability, qualities upon which so much here depends.

congregation and especially for training the members in self-sacrificing effort for the upbuilding of the Kingdom of God.

6.—A FREE CHURCH EDUCATES HER MEMBERS IN THE GRACE OF GIVING.

In a State Church every property-holder living within a specified district is a member of the congregation embracing the territory in question. He is such whether he wishes it or not, whether he is religiously disposed and hence really interested in the church, or so faithless and indifferent as never to enter the door of the sanctuary. Yet, as a member of the church, he must pay his church rates as inevitably as his taxes for the support of the State. The State has the assessment and to some extent the collection of the church rates in its control. Now it is easy to understand that, since all (*) Protestants born in a district must contribute to the support of the congregation, the amount falling upon a single individual must be very small. That which he pays to the church is so little that it can scarcely be called an offering. Hence it is that the members of State Church congregations have so little education in the grace of giving, of denying themselves for the cause of Christ. Zeal for missions has indeed, in the circles in which it has been cultivated, proved a means of developing the spirit of willing and cheerful benevolence. But that so much less is contributed for missions in Germany than in America is in no small degree to be ascribed to the fact that the Church, being there united with the State, does not need to call upon the members for contributions for her own support as is here necessary. And that giving for church purposes seems to our brethren from Germany so much harder than for their American fellow citizens, is simply because in the State Church at home they never learned to give.

A Free Church cannot exist except as its members bring to it free-will offerings of money and property. As only such be-

*Even the Methodists in Germany, who support their own churches by free-will contributions, are not exempt from the payment of the general church rates, as I learned from a casual glance at the tax-bill of a Methodist preacher which fell under my eye. Upon a visit to Germany after a residence of five years in America, a tax-bill was one day presented to me from which I learned that I was expected to pay two "Mark" for the support of the "Evangelical Church."

long to the congregation as have a real interest in it, its membership is always comparatively small. Such a little company, who can only in exceptional cases expect any financial assistance from the synodical treasury, must by its own efforts purchase a building site, build a church and school-house, and support a pastor and perhaps also a school-teacher. This all means a putting of the hand well down into the pocket. Many sums must be contributed which can only be spared by real sacrifice. Of course the willingness thus to give varies in different congregations. There are some whose example is not worthy of imitation, whose members, although richly blessed with earthly goods, erect but an ordinary house of worship and allow their poorly-paid pastor to live in a shabby dwelling. But as a rule large amounts are freely contributed for the Church—figures which would awaken astonishment in Germany. I have in mind at this moment an English Lutheran congregation with whose affairs I am thoroughly familiar. It is small, numbering only 125 communicant members, but it pays its pastor annually \$1,000 and its missionary contributions amount to \$173 per year. A member of this congregation with whom I am personally well acquainted, who receives a salary of \$1,700, pays \$70 annually toward the current expenses of the congregation, in addition to a liberal amount contributed for missions. Another member, whose salary is \$1,500, and who has no property or invested funds, pays annually with conscientious fidelity \$150, or one-tenth of his entire income, to the church and missions. If he continues thus for twenty years, he will within two decades have contributed \$3,000 for the advancement of the kingdom of God.

Truly, a Free Church teaches its members to give. It must be remembered, too, that it is not only the local expenses of the congregation which must be met, but the entire foreign and home mission work of the synod must be supported. The congregations united in a synod must provide for the education of young men for the pastorate, and they therefore support a theological seminary. When poor congregations in the West cry to the older congregations in the East for help, the latter cannot turn coldly away from their own flesh. They bring gifts and offerings therefore for "home mission" work. I mention here a German congregation, which is, indeed, known as one of the

most liberal in its synod, and hence cannot be considered as representing the average. This congregation recently celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary. It was organized with twenty-seven families, and can to-day muster scarcely one hundred. During the quarter of a century it has, according to the published report, contributed for missions \$4,790.07. I have myself frequently preached at mission-festivals of this congregation and have with my own eyes at the close of the services seen \$5 and \$10 bills lying upon the plates. At one of these festivals the offerings reached the sum of \$519. To such giving does a Free Church educate its members.

The influence of a Free Church tends, further, to enlarge the horizon of the members of its congregations, especially by the publication of various church and congregational periodicals.

7.—THE PAPERS PUBLISHED IN A FREE CHURCH ENABLE THE LAITY TO UNDERSTAND PENDING ECCLESIASTICAL QUESTIONS AND TO PARTICIPATE INTELLIGENTLY IN THE DELIBERATIONS OF THE CONGREGATION AND SYNOD.

The religious periodicals of Germany are excellent in their way, and in the selection of suitable instructive material and in beautiful original narratives they are certainly for the most part superior to the publications of our Free Church. But if we examine such a splendid paper as, for example, "Der Nachbar," and the most of the similar Sunday papers, we will observe that the burning ecclesiastical questions of the day are purposely avoided. This is readily explained by the situation of affairs in the State Church. The great majority of the individual members of the congregation have scarcely any part in the government of their own congregations and none at all in that of the larger organizations of the Church. The direction of church and synodical affairs is so largely committed to the higher officials of the Church—the pastors and a few specially prominent laymen—that the real body of the congregations need scarcely even know what are the pending church problems. Hence the discussion of such matters is almost entirely confined to ecclesiastical and theological periodicals designed especially for pastors. (*)

*There are indeed also in Germany a number of congregational papers which give extended space to the discussion of questions of the

In a Free Church it is entirely different. The individual congregation is generally controlled by quarterly congregational meetings, in which every member has a seat and a voice. The elders and deacons only carry out the resolutions of the congregation, or can at most act upon their own responsibility only in matters of comparatively small importance. Synods are composed of pastors and laymen in equal numbers. It is therefore very desirable that the lay delegates should clearly understand the matters to be discussed. Further, when it comes to the carrying into effect of synodical resolutions having reference to the various enterprises of the Church, the questions at issue must be fully explained to the members of the congregations. For this, the chief agency is the synodical church paper. Finally, since it is the duty of a synod to protect its congregations against the assaults and allurements of so many surrounding sects, the discussion of the important questions of the day is unavoidable. The result is that one may often meet laymen in America who are wonderfully well-informed in the sphere of comparative symbolics. The more laymen of this character belong to a congregation, the more stable will it be found at the trying periods when the selection of a new pastor becomes necessary, and the more competent it is to take part in the government of synodical affairs.

Before turning to view the dark side of a Free Church polity, we call especial attention to another and very decided advantage of such a system.

8.—UNDER A FREE CHURCH SYSTEM THE INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS ARE BROUGHT INTO SUCH RELATION TO ONE ANOTHER, THAT THE DEEP-SEATED LONGING FOR CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP IS MET IN THE MOST NATURAL WAY UNDER THE SANCTION OF THE CHURCH ITSELF.

Nowhere can the deep significance of this be more fully appreciated than in Germany. Many pastors there who are heartily interested in the welfare of their congregations are filled

day; as, for example, the "Kropper Anzeiger," "Licht und Leben." But these are generally the mouthpieces of tendencies which do not spring from the State Church as such, but which, on the contrary, bear the stamp of Free Church principles.

with the deepest anxiety because the spiritually-minded among their parishioners cannot find in the services of the church any reasonable gratification of the natural desire for Christian fellowship. They are compelled to unite in various organizations within the congregation in order to enjoy that mutual stimulus which the labor of the congregation itself fails to afford. This may be easily understood when it is remembered of what elements the congregation in a State Church is composed. To it belong all persons living in the parish. Those who sit side by side in the church are often not even personally acquainted and are in no other way brought into contact with one another. Their mutual relations, despite the fact that they are members of the same congregation, remain cold and distant.

There is little opportunity to cultivate the sentiments expressed in the beautiful stanzas of Zinzendorf:

"Herz und Herz vereint zusammen."

In America one hears in religious gatherings of all kinds and very frequently in the regular divine services of the various churches the ringing words, sung with fervent emotion:

Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.

Before our Father's throne
We pour our ardent prayers;
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,
Our comforts and our cares.

We share our mutual woes,
Our mutual burdens bear;
And often for each other flows
The sympathizing tear.

When we at death must part,
It gives us inward pain;
But we shall still be joined in heart
And hope to meet again.

From sorrow, toil, and pain,
And sin we shall be free
And perfect love and friendship reign
Through all eternity.

These lines, it is true, depict the ideal of Christian fellowship; they express the spirit which should prevail in a Christian congregation, but which cannot be fully realized in our imperfect and sinful state. But it is also a fact that the achievement of such a high ideal in any marked degree is not alone hindered by our human infirmity, but finds also a real obstacle in the organization of the Church in union with the civil authority of the land.

In Germany the Church is suffering greatly because of her inability to solve this problem of fellowship. Yet some solution must be found. Otherwise persons of positive religious character must seek outside of the Church for the satisfaction of this natural yearning of the heart.

In a Free Church there is, and can be, no such "problem of fellowship." It is, as already remarked, comparatively a small body. The congregation to which these few members belong is the congregation of their own free choice. Whoever unites with it, does so because his own convictions are in harmony with the prevailing spirit of the organization. The members meet one another frequently at the regular Sunday services, in the Bible-classes, at prayer-meetings and in the congregational meetings in which all matters connected with the welfare of the congregation are freely discussed. There are stated meetings of the singing-societies, the young people's societies and Sunday-school associations. There is probably a special gathering on the pastor's birthday, when he is overwhelmed by the throng of unexpected visitors and receives handsome presents in token of their esteem and good will. There are many social gatherings, opening and closed with the reading of the Scriptures, prayer and Christian song. It may easily be seen that under such circumstances there is no need of further social opportunities, and how it must redound to the well-being of the entire congregation to have the natural desire for intercourse with fellow-believers so fully gratified in the regular official appointments of the congregation itself.

It is freely granted that the ideal of the divine Word and of Christian hymnology is not fully attained in a Free Church. The members of her congregation are but human, as are those who, separating from the congregation, attempt to form asso-

ciations consisting as far as possible exclusively of the most pious persons. In either case, in the present state of human infirmity, the sins of pride, envy, jealousy and the misuse of the tongue will create discords and clearly enough remind us that perfect harmony is not to be expected in this world, in which, according to the express declaration of the Lord himself, the wheat and the tares are to grow together until the great day when He shall come in the clouds of heaven to separate the one from the other and thus usher in the blessed life of heaven.

NOTE OF INFORMATION FOR AMERICAN READERS.

The movement for closer Christian fellowship has gained tremendous force in Germany. Of this I saw abundant evidence during a journey through the country last summer (1902). One of the central agencies in this movement is the Pentecostal Conference at Gnadau instituted by Prof. Christlieb, in whose annual convention it was my privilege to participate. Another is seen in the annual conference at Blankenburg in Thuringia. These conventions are attended by thousands of evangelically active clergymen and laymen from all parts of Germany. They come to receive inspiration for their work by reverent study of the Scriptures and in the immense prayer-meetings. Their practical aims are two-fold. First, evangelization among the unchurched. They labor among the secularized masses by means of a fervent presentation of the Gospel. Their assemblies are real revival meetings, but there is nothing of the violent character which marks so many American meetings of this nature. The mourners' bench and after-meetings are unknown. Methodistic methods find no favor in Germany and hence the Methodist Church, despite large outlays of money, can make no progress. But these German evangelists aim none the less directly at the awakening of a positive personal Christian life. Their polemics are constantly directed against dead orthodoxy and empty ecclesiasticism. Secondly, they have undertaken the task of meeting the desire for Christian fellowship by gathering the awakened in small associations, and in private meetings after the model of Spencer's (*ecclesiola in ecclesia*) cultivating the newly awakened spiritual life by the interchange of ideas drawn from the study of the Scriptures.

These devotional Bible-studies and evangelistic meetings are generally led by laymen. Many of the latter have received no special training for the work. Others have taken a three or four years' course in such institutions as the "Johanneum" (now in Barmen) established by Prof.

Christlieb, or in the St. Chrischona at Basel. Among them are also many influential ministers who have resigned their positions in the State Church, such as Schrenk, Jellinghaus, Keller and Damman.

And all this energy, which so deeply affects the interests of the Church, is exerted without official sanction or guidance, and is often bitterly opposed by it, as in liberalistic Baden. (The Ritschlians are, like Ritschl himself, always consistent adversaries of Pietism). The stricter Lutherans are also for the most part opposed to these fellowship movements, for the reason that the latter do not always remain faithful to Lutheran doctrine. They very frequently deny regeneration in baptism and in the doctrine of sanctification, following the lead of Jellinghaus, they adopt peculiar ideas. But they assume a really radical character only where the Church shows no appreciation of their aims and efforts and where they encounter opposition and persecution. Their relation to the Church is most friendly in Wurtemberg and Westphalia and in the Rhine provinces, i. e., in districts in which Pietism has always been dominant. The Eisenach Conference, under the leadership of Dr. Lepsius, whose first session at the foot of the Wartburg I attended in the summer of 1902, has set itself the task of bringing the leaders of this movement into closer relationship with the leaders of the Established Church in hope of securing a better understanding between them.

The strength already attained by this movement for evangelization and Christian fellowship is seen in the fact that in Wurtemberg, Baden and Rhine provinces there are as many private associations as regular church organizations. I shall never forget the powerful addresses, the stirring prayers and the intelligent and practical transactions of the Gnadau Conference. No movement in Germany displays more vital energy. Its real progress has been made within the past fifteen or twenty years; yet it has already brought about a revival of religious interest throughout Germany which is cheerfully acknowledged by many representatives of the Church and by its cultivation of Christian fellowship among believers it has deepened the religious life.

Such a movement has been made necessary by the condition of the State Church in Germany. Ritschlian professors are found in all the universities, moulding the views of the future pastors of the congregations. When these enter upon the work, they preach a "modern" theology which sends their hearers away empty. Up to the present time, indeed, except in a few localities, the orthodox are in the majority; but among these there are unfortunately many who make no effort to reach the masses. Their continuance in office does not at all depend upon their success in building up their congregations. Though their churches may be almost empty, their salary continues and grows larger. Thus many a pastor who ought to have left at the close of his first five-year term remains for thirty or forty years. Such cases are

not at all exceptional. Really full churches are to be found to-day in Germany only where the pastor is either a peculiarly devout and spiritually-minded man or one whose sermons are eloquent and popular in character, or in cities in which the churches are very few in proportion to the population. It is a natural result of the State Church system that the masses are not reached, and that many pastors display no zeal for the winning of souls. There is scarcely any attempt to cultivate the spirit of Christian fellowship among the believing members of the great congregations. Hence the necessity for such efforts as have been indicated among the laity. But from the view-point of the Church, this is an abnormal state of affairs. If this work is carried on independently upon the territory of the State Church, if in addition to the regularly ordained ministry such unordained preachers, who are not subject to the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical boards, are permitted to labor and gather a following in any congregation without the consent of the pastor, it is no wonder that the question of evangelization and Christian fellowship should have become one of the most burning questions of the day. The best solution of the problem would be the introduction of the Free Church system. Then the Ritschlians would have to take care of themselves, and would be as insignificant in numbers and influence in Germany as are the Unitarians and Free Protestants in America. The orthodox would then also have to make provision for themselves, and every pastor would be compelled to preach in such a way as to edify his people, to labor for the evangelization of the masses, to cultivate the spirit of Christian fellowship, to be diligent in prosecuting the work of the congregation, to fill the church,—or to resign his position and make way for a more competent and efficient man.

II. Disadvantages of a Free Church.

Wherever there is light there must be also shadows. This applies to the outward forms alike of Free Church and State Church. Inasmuch as our discussion concerns not the essential nature of the Church, but merely the form of its organization, in reference to which we have no clear instructions in the Word of God, we may speak of a light and a dark side; and we should not expect to find all possible advantages in the one form as contrasted with the other. In the presentation and discussion of the following propositions, it will be my task to portray some of the disadvantages of a Free Church polity. While I shall endeavor to present these disadvantages faithfully in accordance with the conditions actually existing, I desire to record my conviction that they do not involve any fundamental principles connected with the saving truths of Christianity, and that they are consequently for the most part of such a nature that we may hope in time to see them overcome.

We begin with a point of danger which is often mentioned and which is to-day leading sober-minded churchmen in Germany to regard with dismay the proposition to change the Established Church of Germany into a Free Church.

1.—A FREE CHURCH IS LIABLE TO BE DIVIDED INTO MANY FACTIONS, WHICH, FORMING INDEPENDENT ORGANIZATIONS, STRUGGLE WITH ONE ANOTHER FOR THE CONTROL OF TERRITORY.

In a Free Church only those are found in any one organization who really entertain the same views. All the historic types of Lutheranism—the mild Melancthonian form, the more stringent type of Flacius, the somewhat hierachical conception of Vilmar, the independency of Diedrich and Theodore Harms, and the medium type between these two extremes represented by Loche—all these and other tendencies have here in America taken form in some way for the propagation of their peculiar theological views and exist as separate synodical bodies. (*). While this

*The Melancthonian wing is found in the General Synod; the Flacian is represented in the synods of stricter tendency, as those of

arrangement presents some advantages, as pointed out in Part I. Thesis 1, it involves also some serious disadvantages. Here is, for example, in some communities a German settlement of a few hundred families. This field, which would furnish material for one or two strong congregations, is now claimed by two, three or more synods. The almost omnipresent Missouri Synod is there. It is vigorously opposed by its constant rival, the Ohio Synod and perhaps also by the Iowa Synod. Probably the United Synod also lays claim to some of these Lutheran settlers. The consequence is that this little settlement whose religious and ecclesiastic needs could be very well supplied by one or two of the synods named, is split up into a number of small congregations.

This state of affairs involves a number of serious disadvantages. First of all, as the separate members of this little community unite themselves to one or the other of the congregations seeking to win them, they too often become fanatically prejudiced against the members of the other synods. Distinctions between synodical bodies, which are often based upon entirely non-essential points, are by the laity magnified until they appear matters of prime importance involving the soul's salvation. Thus the laity are drawn into theological controversies and worried with problems for the solution of which their lack of theological training makes them entirely incompetent.* True the discussion of such questions is instructive for laymen and impels them to the study of the Scriptures; but there is great danger that the Bible may become less and less the source of religious culture, and that the most precious passages of the divine Word, designed for the quickening of the religious life, may become to them mere proof-passages for the peculiar doctrines of their own synodical body, and that a fanatical spirit of controversy may

Missouri, Ohio, etc. Vilmar's position upon the doctrine of the Church and the Ministerial Office is substantially reproduced in the Buffalo Synod. The attitude of Diedrich and Theodore Harms upon the same question is similar to that of the Missouri Synod. Loche's views upon the Church, the so-called "Open Questions," and the mode of confessional subscription mark the peculiar character of the Iowa Synod.

*This is the reverse side of the picture drawn at the close of Part I. Thesis 1, in depicting the bright side of the Free Church.

supplant the spirit of joyous profession which the Lord has commended to all His followers.

Another disadvantage in such a divided community is seen in the difficulty experienced by the small congregations in maintaining their existence. One congregation, or perhaps two, may succeed in gaining a sufficient membership to enable them to carry on their work without difficulty. But by their side stand the smaller congregations, so weak that their dissolution may be expected at any moment. Sometimes the rival congregations are all of about equal strength and are all alike hard pressed to keep out of debt. It becomes evident that, in order to ensure the continuance of the congregation, a school must be established; but as the congregation cannot raise any more funds than are needed for the pastor's salary, the pastor must also be the teacher, and he is thus robbed of a large part of the time necessary for his pastoral work, for the preparation of his sermons and for theological studies. If it were not for the existing divisions, the congregation could easily employ a teacher in addition to the pastor. And because the congregation is so small, the pastor must often be content with a salary which may indeed be sufficient for meat and drink, but which does not enable him to keep his library in condition to furnish him the nourishment necessary for his intellectual life. His meagre income compels him to depend upon other sources of revenue, and hence one finds many pastors in country districts who are half farmers, and who themselves bitterly lament that their farms have become for them the grave of all scholarly aspirations.

In the above description I have had in view chiefly the conditions often found in rural districts and in small towns. In large cities, where Germans congregate in ever-increasing numbers, there is room for the missionary enterprises of several synods and we may not seldom there find two or more congregations of rival synods side by side, each larger than desirable from the standpoint of pastoral efficiency. But even in such places are often to be found congregations which, in consequence of the lamentable divisions referred to, have a hard struggle for existence; and it may easily be understood that the resulting rivalry between the congregations of different synods be-

comes a source of much unpleasantness from the pastoral as well as from the economic point of view.

Nor is it in the sphere of congregational life alone that these synodical differences prove injurious. They have a most deleterious effect upon the missionary and benevolent enterprises of the Church at large. A prominent means for the cultivation of a Christian spirit in the family and for maintaining in the congregations a lively interest in the work of the Church is a good synodical paper; and such a paper cannot be successfully conducted without a goodly number of subscribers. But a large subscription list, such for example as that of "*Der Nachbar*," in Germany, (*) is not possible even in the larger synods in America, to say nothing of the periodicals of the smaller synods. This is a direct consequence of the divided condition of the Church.

The most essential institution for the preservation of the life of a synod is its theological seminary. Without retracting anything which has been said (Part I. Thesis 1) of the advantages of the education of ministers under the Free Church system, we must acknowledge that there is also here a darker side. The division of the Church into so many parties results in the establishment, in addition to the well-equipped theological seminaries of the larger bodies, of a number of institutions dependent upon the small synods, which in view of their lack of means and of competent instructors, are not able to furnish the training which is, especially in our day, to be expected from such an institution.

In the sphere of home mission work is reached another disadvantage in the Free Church. By home missions is meant in America the enlargement of the work of a synod through the establishment of new congregations. The weaker of these children of the synod receive from its treasury some assistance in raising the salary of their pastors, in the erection of their church buildings, etc. But this work, so necessary in the development of a Free Church, may easily degenerate into a mere rivalry between the separate synods. Thus, for example, the General Council feels aggrieved that the Missouri Synod should have intruded upon the field in Canada which the Council had already entered;

*The "*Sonntags-blatt*" of Pastor Evers in Berlin (Stoecker's assistant) has eighty thousand readers; "*Der Nachbar*" hundreds of thousands.

and the contention between these two bodies, which are both of a strict Lutheran type, cannot but exert a disastrous influence upon the congregations in one community, one representing the milder and the other the stricter type of Lutheranism, is evident when we remember that here in America we often find the irenic Wurtemberger living side by side with the strict Lutheran from Mecklenburg. But it is very seldom indeed that the mixed character of any community makes necessary the establishment of congregations representing several opposing synods. The mutual bitterness is commonly most intense, not between synods that are widely separated in their principles, but between those which are so closely related that they should really constitute but one body. If the truth of the assertion so frequently made by Kahn in his published works: "The more closely related two parties really are, the more determined is the strife between them," is ever manifest, it is in the history of a Free Church. The Missouri and Ohio Synods both champion a very strict Lutheranism, and yet the antagonism between these two bodies, which really differ only in their views upon the doctrine of election, is the most outspoken. When two such synods undertake to set up rival altars in one and the same place, or whenever two synods essentially alike, with the aid of appropriations from their mission treasuries, contend for the supremacy in a small community, there is abundant reason to deplore the disadvantages of a Free Church.

The same division of forces makes it almost impossible to furnish efficient aid to aged and infirm ministers or their widows and orphan children. All synods in America, indeed, attempt something in this direction, but not one of them is enabled to make adequate provision for this pressing need. The plans are nearly always such that the pastor or his bereaved family cannot avail themselves of the benefits thus offered without feeling themselves dependent upon charity. Where this is not the case, the treasuries are so limited in consequence of the small number of those contributing, that the assistance is entirely inadequate. A combination of the scattered energies would be of great benefit in this department of the Church economy. (*)

*The widows and orphans of pastors are fully provided for in the State Church of Germany. Every pastor must, from the beginning

In many instances the division of the Church into synods standing in unfriendly mutual relations makes a proper administration of church discipline impossible. Here, for example, is a congregation which neglects its plain Christian obligations. It perhaps allows its pastor, who faithfully breaks for it the bread of life, to suffer distressing want together with his family, and stubbornly refuses, though abundantly able, to furnish the support which is absolutely necessary; or it forfeits its Christian character by participating as a congregation in the sinful pleasures of the world. Such a congregation should, after due admonition, be subjected by the synod to proper discipline; but this is generally impossible. The congregation, well knowing how cordially it would be welcomed by another synod, will not submit to admonition or discipline; and if any positive action is taken in this direction it is received with open arms by others and exults in the triumph thus achieved. The same thing occurs when a single member is subjected to discipline by the congregation to which he belongs: an eagerly waiting congregation in the neighborhood cordially welcomes the excluded member to its midst.

But whatever significance may attach to the practical disadvantages thus encountered, they should not lead us to lose all confidence in the possibilities of a Free Church system. The state of distraction which gives rise to the evils and disadvantages which we have noted will not continue indefinitely. It marks a transitional stage in the history of the Church's development. It would be in vain, indeed, to hope for a perfectly harmonious Lutheran Church in America. (*). For a long time to come, there will be parties representing the milder and the stricter types of Lutheranism, and hence opposing synods; but

of his ministry make regular contributions to a widows' fund, from which all pastors' widows receive an allowance which is paid to them with great punctuality.

*For our consolation in the present condition of affairs we may reason as follows: There are opposite theological tendencies, which all give prominence to some particular phases of the truth, and whose mission it will be to mutually correct each other until each one of these tendencies shall have excluded all error and each shall give faithful expression to the whole truth. Upon this law depends all progress in the history of doctrine.

from present indications we may be permitted to hope that in the not too distant future there may be combinations of forces which will prove of far-reaching significance for the practical work of the Church. An interesting illustration of the way in which long-standing hostilities may be allayed in the course of time is seen in the Tennessee Synod, which from the year of its establishment (in 1820) vigorously assailed the other Lutheran synods and especially the North Carolina Synod. It is to-day, and has been for some years, side by side with the body so vigorously assailed, a constituent part of the United Synod of the South. Thus also the Ohio and Iowa Synods, after a colloquy (held in Michigan City, Ind., in 1893) approached one another so nearly that they now recognize one another as sister synods and extend to one another the privileges of church fellowship. Without claiming the gift of prophecy, it may be already foreseen that there will some day be a union between the English portion of the General Council and the conservative wing of the General Synod—although not indeed until the other wing of the General Synod, which now so strenuously protests against such organic union with the General Council, is pervaded by the spirit of its more conservatively Lutheran associates, nor until the Germans of the General Council, who from the opposite point of view likewise protest against such a union, shall have reached another generation, in which they will certainly have different views upon this point. These comments upon the combinations already effected or in prospect have been made at this time because they furnish the basis of our conviction, that the greater the progress made in this process of combination among the synodical bodies of America, the more rapidly will all the difficulties discussed in the present thesis disappear.

We pass now to another of the darker aspects of the Free Church system.

2.—IN FREE CHURCH COUNTRIES THERE ARE ALWAYS MANY CONGREGATIONS WHICH, FEARING TO LOSE THEIR LIBERTY, REFUSE TO UNITE WITH ANY SYNOD; AND, SINCE THE LAITY ARE SELDOM COMPETENT TO DECIDE DOCTRINAL QUESTIONS WITHOUT THE GUIDANCE OF THE CLERGY, THE GREATEST DAMAGE IS OFTEN WROUGHT.

In a Free Church it must be left to the option of every congregation to which synod it will belong, or whether it will in the

exercise of its liberty refuse to connect itself with any ecclesiastical body. Hence many congregations are organized as "free congregations," thus proclaiming their purpose to remain independent and not unite with any synod. But we must here discriminate between two classes of congregations. The most radical generally have in their veins something of the blood of the Swiss Reformers or the champions of the German Protestant Union. They have usually emigrated from some portion of Germany or Switzerland in which modern rationalism prevails. Very frequently also it will be found that some of the 1848 elements have had a share in the formation of this class of free congregations, and have, by means of their intellectual superiority, left their impress upon the congregations thus organized. These congregations have usually been unwilling to be known as either Lutheran, or Reformed, or United, and they have generally been organized under the title of "Free Evangelical-Protestant" congregations. There is found, as a rule, in their constitutions no confessional basis going beyond that of the Cincinnati Protestants: "The religious basis is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the interpretation of which is left open to reason guided by the Christian conception of truth."* There is indeed a kind of union in these free congregations in the "Association of Ministers of the German Evangelical-Protestant Church of North America"; but, as the very name indicates, this is really only a combination among the ministers, whose aim is simply to render one another mutual assistance in procuring charges and to interpose a barrier to the influence of the dominant synods. A few of these radical free congregations allow their pastor to belong to a Lutheran synod, while themselves resolutely declining to be in any degree influenced by such relationship; but the majority of them will not tolerate any pastor who belongs to a synod having a positive confessional basis. (*)

*There lies before me the constitution of such a congregation in which the confessional paragraph reads as follows: "No other divine service shall ever be introduced in this congregation than such as is based upon the chief doctrines of the Christian religion and is in harmony with the advanced spirit of the age and modern scholarship."

*These congregations, all German, are found chiefly in Cincinnati, Pittsburg, St. Louis and the vicinity of these cities. They are

There is, however, a large number of congregations, which are also "free," but which are to be carefully discriminated from the class of which we have spoken. They are found in association with almost all synods, and are served by pastors in connection with these bodies; yet they most scrupulously guard their independence of all synodical control. They are in harmony with the doctrinal position of the synod; but yet they are determined to be free. What is the explanation of this strange attitude? They are afraid that in some time of disturbance, as e. g., in case of a dispute with the pastor or with some party in their own midst, the synod might interfere in the local affairs of the congregation. Above all, they fear that upon some occasion of dispute the synod might lay claim to their church property. Yet this prejudice against organic union with a synod, so deeply rooted in many congregations, is totally without any justification. It is often observed, that the more intelligent and cultured a congregation, the less liable it is to prejudices of this kind. I cite as examples the large and wealthy congregations of the English synods, among whose members are commonly found shrewd business men and first-class lawyers. If they consider synodical connection a safe and good thing, surely our German congregations may also take the risk!

The Synod extends its actual jurisdiction only over the pastors belonging to it. Its influence upon the congregations is almost entirely of an advisory nature. If a congregation is unwilling to be guided by a resolution of the synod—for example, to take a collection as requested or to introduce a book which the synod recommends, or if it refuses to submit to the decision of the synod in any case of dispute, it has perfect liberty to act in such matters as it desires. The synod can at most do no more than instruct its pastors to decline to serve such a congregation.

The form of constitution recommended by the synod to its congregations usually contains a paragraph providing that in

often immensely large and pay their pastors a handsome salary. In connection with them balls are held and various worldly amusements freely indulged in. The pastor's relation to his congregation is that of a hired servant. He is elected for one year and a vote is annually taken to decide whether he shall remain longer. This small body has no future before it in America.

case of a dispute between two parties in the congregation the church property shall belong to the party which remains faithful to the original confessional basis of the congregation. It is upon this paragraph that the free congregations commonly base their fear that the synod may at some time deprive them of their property. But let us look at this question fairly. Let us suppose a law-suit between two parties for the possession of the church-property of a congregation, in which the victory is gained by the side which desires to maintain the previous synodical connection. Who is in such case the owner of the property? Certainly not the synod, but that portion of the congregation which has remained true to the confessional basis adopted at the original organization. Is this not right? When a number of Lutherans form an organization and by great self-denial are enabled to erect a church building in which they may worship God after the manner of their fathers, should not these noble men have some guarantee that the church thus erected shall remain for future generations a Lutheran church and not become the property of a non-Lutheran denomination? And if a congregation once begins to shift its basis, it is hard to foresee where it will end. It is particularly necessary in America to take a positive position, and this can be done by a Lutheran congregation only by uniting with a Lutheran synod.

It is really a serious disadvantage of the Free Church system that so many congregations remain independent, and cannot be induced to connect themselves with any synod. The injurious effect of such a position upon the internal life of the congregations themselves is often most lamentable, especially if doctrinal disputes arise. I recall an instance of this which fell under my own observation. A pastor who was called by a Lutheran but independent congregation in the belief that he would preach the Word of God in accordance with the teachings of the Lutheran Church gradually revealed his character as a fundamental errorist, denying the doctrines of the Trinity, the divinity of Christ and His vicarious sacrifice, miracles, and the inspiration of the Scriptures, and then finally withdrew to join the Protestant Union. In a congregational meeting in which he was called upon to meet the charge of teaching false doctrine, he attempted

to prove, by the citation of a number of passages from the Old Testament which were under his presentation made to appear offensive to the assembled laymen, that the Bible is not the Word of God; and when bringing forward his rationalistic views he so disguised them under a mass of pietistic phraseology that the minds of the pious simple-minded members of the congregation were utterly confused, and after hearing his defence they agreed that his teaching was in harmony with the Lutheran catechism. I left that meeting with the deep conviction that a congregation, since it is not composed of theologians, has in itself no adequate means of protection against false doctrine—not even against the glaring, fundamental errors of rationalism, and much less in the questions at issue between the Lutheran and Reformed Churches or between different branches of the Lutheran Church. For an unorthodox pastor whose erroneous views are permitted to color his preaching, it is really an easy matter, if he possesses some talent for eloquent and persuasive address, to deceive his congregation and convince them that what he teaches is really the doctrine of their Church, but presented in a more beautiful, profound and intelligent way than by ordinary men. A congregation can have no real guarantee against dangerous errors, except by uniting with a synod and placing confidence in its advice. To be sure, a synod may sometimes make a mistake in recommending a pastor to a congregation, as it cannot read the hearts of men. But when such a mistake has been made, the synod is always ready and in position to remedy the error. It has been the experience everywhere that the congregations in regular connection with synods have developed the most certainly and with the least friction. I could name many congregations which owe their present peace and prosperity above all else to the fact that at a critical period of their history they were in fixed connection with a synod.

The mistrust of synodical bodies appears to prevail almost exclusively in German congregations. English churches are, without exception, found in regular synodical connection. It would seem, therefore, that the disadvantages of the Free Church system referred to in this chapter must gradually disappear with the advance of the inevitable Americanizing process which may be noted wherever German churches exist.

Another disadvantage of the Free Church system is seen in the fact that

III.—THE PASTOR'S SENSE OF DEPENDENCE UPON HIS CONGREGATION OFTEN WEAKENS HIS TESTIMONY FOR THE TRUTH.

A committee of investigation upon which I was at one time called to serve, whose task was to restore harmony between a pastor and his congregation, found one charge against the pastor to be "disobedience toward his superiors" (*Vorgesetzten*), by whom were meant the officers of the congregation. This charge, which has ever since been ringing in my ears, shows how fully convinced those people were that the pastor was simply the servant of the congregation. (*)

It is not difficult to see how in a Free Church the idea of the dependence of the pastor upon the congregation may arise. His salary is secured by the free-will offerings of his members. If but a few of these become hostile to him and withhold their contributions, the burden falls so much more heavily upon those who remain faithful. This causes dissatisfaction and the position of the pastor becomes insecure. Especially in small congregations every member counts, particularly every member who has wealth. When one such member withdraws his support, perhaps with a few of his relatives and friends who stand by him, it is in many cases at once a settled matter that the pastor must resign. And even though such a member should not actually withdraw from the congregation, yet the idea of having an opponent and enemy among his people is so repulsive to a sensitive pastor that he will willingly do everything in his power to avoid such unpleasantness. The members of the congregation know

*How thoroughly perverted is such a view of the pastoral relationship and how directly in conflict with scriptural teaching, may be made evident by the reflection, that even the slave does not serve the field, but serves his master in cultivating the field. Thus the pastor is not the servant of the congregation, but the servant of God in cultivating the congregation. This is in harmony with I. Cor. IV. 1: "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God," and I. Cor. 3:9: "For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." While the pastor is a servant in his relation to God, he is in his relation to his congregation the shepherd of the flock.

this and hence feel that the pastor must, at least to a certain extent, strive to retain their good-will, and is thus dependent upon them.

But this effort upon the part of the pastor to preserve peace at all hazards and to avoid giving offence to any very often makes him timid in speaking the plain truth. There are so many occasions in congregational life when it is the solemn duty of the pastor to say, as did John the Baptist to Herod: "It is not right." The pastor is a witness for God, and as such must speak the truth. He must, although of course with all pastoral prudence, yet in the last resort without regard to personal hostility and persecution, perform his duty, and must so speak in his private intercourse with his people as well as in the pulpit, that he may give a good account before God and his own conscience. But it is a fact that, in view of the peculiar relations between pastor and people in a Free Church, such boldness of utterance requires a gift not possessed by every one who enters the ministry. A Luther, a Paul Gerhardt, a Muhlenberg, a Loehe, a Wyneken had, in combination with an imposing bodily presence, this peculiar power over others; but a Melancthon and a Gellert did not possess it and hence never assumed the pastoral office. It is not to be denied, therefore, that, considering the endowments of the average incumbent of the sacred office, the dependence of the pastor upon his congregation is an unfortunate feature in a Free Church, which often closes the lips when they should be opened in defence of the truth.

At this point the advocates of a State Church may rightly claim a decided advantage for their system. It is indeed by no means a matter of indifference to the pastor in a State Church whether the members of his congregation are his friends or his enemies. But when it is necessary for him to speak plainly, he can always do so without having to fear the loss of his position and his living.

Yet even here, while acknowledging a very serious difficulty in the Free Church system, we must not draw the picture in too sombre colors. Many pastors in America bear fearless testimony against wrong and error, and yet remain for many years or even through life in the same congregation. It all depends, in the

last instance, upon the man himself. Although he may be no Ambrose, nor Loehe, nor Muhlenberg—yet if the congregation but recognizes him as a true Christian, if he but acts with proper prudence, if the members feel that his words come from the heart of a true spiritual father, if he knows how to speak the truth in love,—then is he in fact irresistible, and even though, under peculiar circumstances, a member may here and there become embittered against him, the great majority of the congregation will esteem, love and honor him, and, supported thus by the affection of his people, he stands in a position as firm and secure as that of the pastor in a State Church.

But it all depends upon the man! If he has failings which are very manifest (See Part I. Thesis 5a); if he does not have "a good report of them which are without"; if he is dogmatic in temper and evidently concerned chiefly for his own dignity,—he will not make much headway in a Free Church, and when he enters upon a new field it will be well for him to keep his staff in hand. A Free Church emphatically requires men of genuine and well-rounded character, to whom the congregations can look up under all circumstances. Only under ministrations of such pastors truly called of God can the difficulties of a Free Church polity here referred to be so fully met that the kingdom of God shall not suffer from them. The idea so widely spread in Germany, that a pastor who is not competent for labor in the State Church of that country may yet be good enough for America, is therefore utterly without foundation. No; in a Free Church the man must sustain the office, whereas in a State Church the office largely sustains the man, and many an unfortunate pastor who failed to recognize this fact, has learned it by most bitter experience in America.

IV.—SINCE IN A FREE CHURCH THE CONGREGATION CAN
FLOURISH ONLY WHEN THE PASTOR IS ABUNDANT IN
LABORS, THE TENDENCY IS TO PREFER YOUNG MEN, AND
THUS OLD AND EXPERIENCED PASTORS ARE LEFT WITH-
OUT WORK OR BREAD.

In the State Church (where the salary of pastors is fixed by the official boards of the Church at large, it is very properly so arranged that a young pastor begins with a moderate income,

which is gradually increased as he advances in age, wisdom and in the value of his services. In a Free Church it is frequently—we may say, usually—the opposite. The young pastor secures the more important places, while the old man must see himself forced into some smaller charge with a meagre income, and is even made to feel that he is no longer wanted anywhere and left to lament that he has been crowded out of the ranks.

The German churches of America have not suffered from this cause to the same extent as the English churches, and it is the latter which furnish the basis for the following comments. The English congregations have a much harder struggle for existence than the German. They have to compete, not only with Lutheran congregations in their vicinity, but also with those of the Reformed type, i. e., Presbyterian, Congregationalists, Campbellite, Methodist, Baptist, etc.; for it is very seldom that one finds among the English-speaking population the pronounced confessional bias which leads our German people to cling to their own Church at any cost. Subject from childhood to the influence of the most various religious tendencies, the English people are only too apt to unite with whatever denomination may offer the most prominent inducements. In order to gain members, the English Lutheran congregations, being found chiefly in towns and cities, are compelled to have large and beautiful churches, built upon expensive sites; whereas the German are prevaillingly in rural districts, and hence not driven by competition to such large expenditures. The interior of the church must in comfort and luxury meet the requirements of the well-to-do American; there must be carpeted floors and, if possible, cushioned seats, heating by steam or hot-air furnaces, electric light, etc. The choir must furnish artistic music, even though the talent must be well paid for their services. The pastor must move among his richer members and neighbors as an equal, must clothe himself and his family with elegance, must live in a fine house and, in order to do all this, he must have a correspondingly large salary. All this, and many other similar considerations, requires the outlay of large sums of money. The members of such a congregation cannot meet all these expenses from their regular income, though this may be very considerable.

There must therefore be special means for raising funds. For this purpose the congregation establishes various organizations: Sunday-school societies, young people's societies, women's societies (one for each ward or section of the city), whose duty it is to gather money by all sorts of enterprises. At the head of this machinery stands the pastor. He is the main-spring of it all. He must lead in every undertaking, must devise plans and arouse enthusiasm. Hence in case of a vacancy it is said: An elderly man cannot do all this work so well as a young man; he will lack the necessary activity and enthusiasm and power of inspiring others. This same youthful enthusiasm is expected of the pastor in his pastoral visitation and in his social intercourse with the community at large, and above all in his preaching. He must attract people to the church and increase the membership. An elderly pastor, it is said, cannot do this so well as one full of the fire of youth. Hence it has come to pass that, in the view of many congregations, there is a limit of age beyond which a pastor is no longer serviceable. Some congregations at once strike the name of a pastor from the list of possible candidates upon learning that he is over fifty years of age. The well-known pastor, Dr. Cuyler, of Brooklyn, some years ago discussed this subject in a widely-quoted article under the caption: "The Dead-line in the Ministry," and countless articles have since appeared under the same heading in the church papers.

It is certainly a lamentable state of affairs, if a pastor in the very years when his gathered experience and his intellectual and spiritual maturity should increase his efficiency, is to be cast aside by the Church as of no further use. Not only does this involve much suffering upon the part of the pastor and his family, but under such circumstances the development of the congregation will be chiefly an external one. It must be acknowledged that this deplorable condition is a direct result of the Free Church system, in which the congregation is compelled to do its own financiering. And it must be confessed also that with the further Americanizing of our congregations this condition is likely to be aggravated rather than improved.

Yet even here a Free Church is not altogether helpless. The remedy, or rather the preventive, for this "dead-line in the minis-

try" lies chiefly in the personal course of the individual minister. A pastor who from the beginning of his ministry neglects the culture of his own mind, who devotes only so much labor to the preparation of his sermons as is absolutely necessary, who preaches only because that is the proper thing to do on Sunday and not because he has a special message to deliver to his people and wants to give them the very best that he is able to furnish; a pastor who, living from hand to mouth, prepares for his weekly sermons nothing more than homiletic outlines, who can scarcely be driven to a thorough exegetical study of his text and to whom "invention" in connection with a text is an unknown and unnecessary thing; finally, a pastor who after completing his seminary course, lays his theological books upon the shelf, and who, insensible to all higher interests, feels no desire to bear a part in the solution of the great questions of his day,—such a pastor should not be surprised to find that at the age of fifty years he has lost so much of his personal vigor and attractiveness that a congregation with high aspirations will not venture to commit its interests to his care. On the other hand, a pastor who is at heart interested in his holy calling, whose visits during the week are not merely of a social character, but for the purpose of bringing real spiritual benefit to his people, and whose sermons have the same end distinctly in view; who never forgets that he is a theologian and allows nothing to prevent him from devoting at least a few hours every day to prayer and study, despising the vain excuse that the pressure of practical duties will not allow it and remembering that these things are absolutely necessary as the sources of spiritual power,—such a pastor will be young and vigorous even in old age, and may easily furnish inspiration and guidance to the young of his flock. Wherever we find in our English Lutheran churches pastors advanced in years who are yet laboring efficiently, enjoying the esteem and affection of their congregations, they are men who have not allowed themselves to rust out, but who have kept themselves in health and vigor by daily fellowship with God and by drawing constantly from the living fountains of pure theology.

Thus we are again reminded that it is a Free Church which makes the largest demands upon those who occupy her pulpits, since the office alone will not sustain the man with all his failings.

We mention finally a disadvantage attaching to the Free Church system which is closely related to the above.

V.—AS THE PASTOR IN A FREE CHURCH IS COMPELLED TO DEVOTE SO MUCH OF HIS ENERGY TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF FINANCIAL INTERESTS, THERE IS DANGER THAT THE SPIRITUAL OVERSIGHT OF THE FLOCK MAY BE NEGLECTED.

In a Free Church, purely material, business affairs often become really matters of primary importance. If a congregation is unable to pay its debts, support its pastor, and meet its running expenses, the preaching of the Gospel and all pastoral oversight must cease. It becomes, therefore, a very vital consideration in the selection of a pastor, that he should have good business talent and organizing and executive ability. The best pastor for many of the fashionable churches in our cities and larger towns is the one who is most fertile in devising plans for the raising of money. Many an ordained pastor, degraded as it were to the rank of a financial agent, is kept running about the streets making arrangements, now for an oyster-supper, now for an ice-cream festival or other entertainment. To say nothing of the unspiritual and unseemly things which are thus introduced into the churches, it is to be deeply lamented that the energies of the pastor, whose proper calling is to lead souls to Christ, should be exhausted in such trifling concerns. By yielding to the inordinate demands thus made upon him, many an American pastor has almost entirely lost his character as a preacher of the Gospel.

It should, however, in fairness, be remarked, that although such abuses are not known in a State Church because of the fixed arrangements for financial support, yet demands of another kind are there made upon the time and strength of the pastor, which no less detract from his efficiency in preaching and in pastoral work. He must keep registers and report in detail to official boards in regard to all sorts of matters connected with the congregation and frequently of the school as well. The pastors of the State Church often loudly complain that they are nothing more than department-clerks and must be forever occupied in making out reports.

We might continue indefinitely in thus enumerating the light and dark aspects of the Free Church system, but it has not been our object to present a systematic or exhaustive view of the subject. We have merely sought, upon the basis of our own observation, to call attention to a few of the prominent features of the system as we find it in practical operation. Having done this, it may not be out of place to trace the advantages and disadvantages thus brought to view to the fundamental principle underlying the whole arrangement. This is found in the individualism which so strongly marks the entire public life of America. In monarchical Germany, the welfare of the community is the first consideration, from which deductions are drawn bearing upon the life of the individual. This is true in the Church as well as in the State. In America the starting point is the individual, who, uniting with other likeminded individuals forms, first a smaller, then a larger circle of fellowship. In monarchical Germany, the people are governed. In republican America they govern themselves, electing their rulers and taking a very direct part in the management of public affairs. In Germany the individual is sustained by inherited social position, family connections, and academic training; whereas in America every man must stand by himself and be judged upon his own merits. A thorough educational course is here highly valued—the higher schools of America furnish better training than is commonly believed in Europe; but this will not secure a position unless the graduate manifests real ability. The question in this country is not: "What have you studied?" All depends upon the answer to the question: "What can you do?" In Germany, with its characteristic reverence for the ideal, one may pursue a thought for the thought's sake; learning is largely its own end, and the student studies for the sake of studying. But in America, with her strong bent toward the practical and useful, learning must almost exclusively serve practical ends, and in the Church any idea, which is to persist, must lay practical hold upon the heart and rally congregations to its support. Even the progress of a denomination depends upon the force of its individuality. A communion, to make headway in America, must not be colorless. The Lutheran must be entirely Lu-

theran. The Methodist must cling to the anxious bench. Baptists succeed best by firmly maintaining the peculiarity of their denomination. This explains largely the phenomenal growth of Methodism in the days of the great revival movement, and the rapid spread of the exclusive wing of the Lutheran Church, the Missouri Synod. Thus also every single congregation, being without any support whatever from the State, must stand alone and take care of itself as best it can.

A more thorough study of the advantages and disadvantages observable in the Free Church in this country would make it clear that they are nearly all intimately connected with the individualism which so distinctly colors all American life. (*)

The bright side of the Free Church system is at many points exceedingly attractive. Its chief advantages is in its fresh, pulsating life. This life is a direct result of the system itself and cannot be in any way engrafted upon the State Church. (*) The only hope of securing anything of this life in

*Yet I would not on this account call in question the right to existence of the Free Churches of Germany. They owe their origin to a spirit of fidelity to the Lutheran confession which was believed to be endangered at the time of the establishment of the Union. No one can read their history without reaching the conviction that they were organized from conscientious motives. We should not be misled by the lamentable divisions which afterwards arose. It must be remembered that these divisions were caused chiefly by different views concerning the Church and the Ministerial Office (which are not clearly defined in the Lutheran confessions), and as the question was one of new official statements of doctrine, it was inevitable that there should be differences of view in regard to problems not sufficiently discussed in the symbols. If a mutual understanding can be reached upon the points referred to, the Free Churches of Germany may yet become strong and influential.

1. Suggestions such as that of Dr. Schultze of Leipzig concerning a combination of the heads of families, or that which looks to a limitation of the right of voting to the really active members of a congregation, are not practicable. They would be but as new patches on an old garment. The affection of a congregation for its pastor, liberality in giving for the Church, etc., depend upon nothing else so much as upon the fact that the congregation is thrown upon its own resources and must furnish the means for its own support. This is the fundamental condition from which all else—advantages as well as disadvantages—naturally follows.

the latter is through the agency of strong personalities, who here and there—generally without any official connection with the State Church as such—take the lead in great enterprises of Inner and Foreign Missions. The great undertakings of this character within the bounds of the State Church of Germany are always organized upon Free Church principles. The labors of Francke, Wichern, Gossner, Loehe, Von Bodelschwingh, Jensen, and Paulsen all run in such channels, and their incorporation into the organism of the State Church would doubtless be their ruin.

On the other hand, the dark side of the Free Church system is exceedingly disheartening for those who are brought into contact with its more distressing features, such as we have discussed in Theses 1 and 3 of Part I. Yet it should be borne in mind that there is reason to hope for a correction of the evil of needless divisions referred to in the first of the above theses, and in connection with the difficulties pointed out in the second the counterbalancing advantage must not be overlooked, that a Free Church demands and develops men of fully-rounded Christian character. Where the pastor measures up to this requirement, the evils complained of, which seem inseparable from a Free Church system, are very materially diminished. With a body of pastors, on the other hand, falling far below the biblical standard, many of the disadvantages peculiar to a Free Church are of such a nature as to very seriously obscure the true ideal of church-life.

The question, whether a Free Church patterned after that of America would be desirable for Germany, would be generally answered in the negative by the theologians and pastors of the fatherland, however fully they may recognize the bright side of our ecclesiastical system. It is maintained with much reason that under such a system there would be insuperable difficulties in the control of church property, that the German masses have not been trained to liberal giving for the support of the Church, and, above all, that a State Church, as historically developed, is the most suitable form for a monarchical country such as Germany. Without disputing the correctness of this view, we maintain on the other hand, that under Amer-

ican conditions a State Church would be found altogether intolerable. It is to be said further in favor of a Free Church, that the Christian Church was originally organized in that form, and it was as a Free Church that it made such triumphant progress in the world, smiting to the earth before it heathen schools and temples. In this form it developed the wonderful vitality which still awakens our admiration and makes us long for a return of the early heroic age.

A Free Church pulsates with life—a life which is the direct product of its form of organization, the conditions to which it gives rise, and the peculiar features which mark it as an independent system. We may well overlook many of its failings, in view of this immense advantage.

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